

think I should say much more today. I think this should be Justice Blackmun's day.

Roe v. Wade

Q. Mr. President, Justice Blackmun has been known for his commitment to the decision in *Roe versus Wade* that legalizes abortion. How important is it for the Supreme Court to keep that philosophy toward the right to abortion? And I wondered if Justice Blackmun might say a few words about where he thinks the Court might be headed on that issue.

The President. Well, I don't know if he wants to talk about it. You know, of course, that I agree with the decision, and I think it's an important one in a very difficult and complex area of our Nation's life. But again, I don't want to talk about the appointment of a new Justice today.

Q. Justice Blackmun, could you say a few words about *Roe versus Wade*, what it's meant and why you think that it has been an important decision for our country?

Justice Blackmun. I didn't hear that. Can you repeat it?

Q. I'm sorry. Could you say a few words about the decision in *Roe versus Wade* and about why you think it's been important for women in this country, your continued commitment to it, and where you think the Court might be headed on it?

Justice Blackmun. Well, I didn't come in here to indulge in a question-and-answer session, but I'll try to answer that. *Roe* against *Wade* hit me early in my tenure on the Supreme Court. And people forget that it was a 7-to-2 decision. They always typify it as a Blackmun opinion. But I'll say what I've said many times publicly: I think it was right in 1973, and I think it was right today. It's a step that had to be taken as we go down the road toward the full emancipation of women.

Supreme Court Nomination

Q. Mr. President, I take it you've had some advance warning that this might be coming. Could you give us some sense of how much opportunity you've had to get your process started and how far along it might be?

The President. Well, I spoke a little this morning with our staff about it. We will have, I think, a good process that will involve Mr.

Cutler, the White House Counsel, the Attorney General, Mr. McLarty, and Mr. Lader, who's been overseeing our personnel operations. And I think it will proceed in a very deliberate way. You know, Justice Blackmun referred in his letter to a conversation we had several months ago indicating that he might—or that he intended to leave at some time during this year or announce his intention. I, frankly, kept hoping he would change his mind. But I think we are prepared, and I think we proceed forthwith.

Q. Mr. President—this is for Justice Blackmun. I thought you had taken the public decision that your doctors would tell you when it was time to go. That having been so, can you say how you reached your decision to retire? And would you add to that how you can get along without a daily fix of hate mail? [Laughter]

Justice Blackmun. I missed the punch line.

The President. He asked how you were going to get along without your daily fix of hate mail.

He offered to take some of mine. [Laughter]

Justice Blackmun. I think the President and I have a lot to share in those hate mail things, but we'll see. We'll let the future take care of itself. I'm advised there's a vacancy on the 8th Circuit I think I'll apply for. I'll be turned down I know. [Laughter]

Q. Mr. President, it took you 3 months the last time. Will it take you that long this time?

The President. Thank you. Let's go.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:34 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Remarks at the Funeral Service for William H. Natcher in Bowling Green, Kentucky

April 6, 1994

To the family of our friend Bill Natcher; Mr. Speaker; Governor; distinguished Members of Congress; all those who have preceded me on the program: Reverend Welch; Reverend Bridges, thank you for that wonderful sermon; Mr. Orendorf, thank you for making us laugh and for being so wise.